

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, December 21, 2012

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Action Item Calendar

January 10: Safety, Emergency Plans due (see below)
January 25: NECAP demographic files deadline (see below)
February 15: NECAP demographic files corrections due(see below)

Notes from Commissioner Gist

1. LEAs asked to submit to RIDE copies of school-safety, emergency-response plans – *Action Item*

As we approach the holiday recess and prepare to welcome the New Year, this has been a stressful week for all of us in the wake of the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. I appreciate all that you have done to allay the concerns of your students, your teachers, and your community and to ensure that great teaching and learning continues in our schools. Despite the tragic events in Connecticut, it is important that our communities understand that our schools are safe places for our children. I hope that the information we have sent you over the course of the week

regarding helping students and teachers respond to incidents of violence and emergency procedures that help keep schools safe have been helpful to you. I welcome your feedback on these materials, and I appreciate the useful materials that you and your team have share with me to date.

As I have noted to you, I have been in contact with state and local police and fire officials and we plan to review all of our regulations and guidance regarding school safety and emergency-response plans. Our hope is to learn from the events in Connecticut so as to make sure that our schools continue to be safe and secure learning environments. As part of this review process, both Regents Chairman Caruolo and I would like to review all school-safety plans and emergency-response plans, which all school districts must maintain (RIGL 16-21-23). Please send me a copy of your school-safety plan and your emergency-response plan to help us as we work to examine best practices and areas of need across the state. You may send me your plans either by e-mail, to the attention of the Board of Regents liaison, angela.teixeira@ride.ri.gov, or by surface mail, to Angela Teixeira's attention, at RIDE, 255 Westminster St., Providence 02903. If the your plans are available online, you may simply send Angela Teixeira a URL link so that we can access your plans that way. Please submit the materials to us by the close of business on Thursday, **January 10**. Please let me know if you have any questions about this request.

2. Career-technical education participation grows

As part of our commitment to ensuring that all students have access to multiple pathways that will prepare them for postsecondary education and challenging careers, we have made a lot of progress over the past two years in improving access to

career-technical education. Our new Career and Technical Education regulations, which the Board of Regents approved in March, enable students to enroll in whatever program best suits their needs, regardless of location. The regulations also commit us to develop and support programs that will prepare students for careers in critical and emerging industries, such as information technology and health care.

Last week, we learned that the membership in Rhode Island Skills USA, our largest career-technical education student organization, has reached its highest level ever, with 6,787 student members to date. Rhode Island was the first state in the country to exceed last year's enrollment levels, and the executive director of Skills USA, Timothy W. Lawrence, has congratulated our State Association Director, Joshua Klemp, for leading the way on student membership. Let me extend my congratulations, as well, to all of our career-technical education educators and students!

3. RIDE to issue guidance on use of evaluations at the local level

As we move forward with our first full year of implementation of educator evaluations across the state, we all have been paying close attention to the use of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) as part of the evaluation process. From the outset, we decided to use SLOs as part of the evaluation process because we wanted to build our evaluation system on a foundation of multiple measures. We certainly did not and do not want a system that is overly reliant on either classroom observations or standardized test scores. I believe that, in developing SLOs we are respecting that our professional educators working every day in the classroom know their own students, have goals that they are working to achieve regarding student outcomes, and that they

have ways or evaluating student growth – and we want to incorporate all of these principles into our evaluation system. No doubt, establishing SLOs is hard to do. It would have been much easier to invest in a series of standardized tests to measure various aspects of student growth and achievement in many subjects and grade levels, but we did not choose to go down that route. We are working through the challenges of implementing something that has not been standardized, and we all will benefit from this process – especially our students.

As we implement evaluations this year, I have been in close communication with both statewide teachers' unions, the principals' association, and with your superintendents' association regarding the use of evaluations at both the state and local level. As you may be aware, the Providence Public Schools has decided, with RIDE support, that for this year they will not use the SLO component of the evaluations in making employment decisions about teachers. The use of evaluations at the local level may vary somewhat across the state, and in order to help you with your decisions about using evaluations regarding employment and other matters, we plan to issue some guidance next month about the use of evaluations at the local level. Regardless of what local decisions you may make, I believe that our state is committed to using SLOs as part of the evaluation process and that we all are committed to using evaluations first and foremost to support continuous growth and improvement for all of our educators. Our focus now is how to ensure that we implement the system effectively.

4. Teacher of the Year letter of advice published in new book

Our 2012 Teacher of the Year, Julie Lima Boyle, of Coventry High School, has a letter of advice included in a new book, *Letters to a*

New School Teacher, Volume 2, which The RhodeRunner Press has just published. The book contains many fine letters of advice from great educators across the country. Congratulations, Julie!

5. Field Memo to resume on January 4

As schools will be on vacation until January 2, there will be no Field Memo distributed next week. The Field Memo will resume on January 4. I hope that you enjoy a safe and wonderful holiday with family and friends, and I hope all of us enjoy a healthy and exciting New Year. I will be visiting many schools and districts during 2013, and I am looking forward once again to meeting with you and your team members and to seeing many great examples of the teaching and learning that take place in our schools every day!

From RIDE

Common Core

6. RIDE offers professional development on Mathematics Common Core State Standards

We are pleased to be able to offer professional development (PD) targeted at fraction instruction in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Mathematics in grades 3 – 5. The *Building Coherence in Fraction Instruction in Grades 3 – 5* PD sessions will be offered several times throughout the current school year and will be dedicated to assisting LEAs in developing a cadre of LEA or school leaders to facilitate professional development at the school or LEA level. Therefore, we will allot each LEA a specific number of spaces across all of the PD sessions. This structure will enable an LEA to set its own priorities according to its individual needs.

For registration information, please see:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/CommonCore/CCSS_PD_Sessions-Mathematics-2013.pdf

For questions regarding this Mathematics CCSS professional development, please contact Susan Pagliaro, at susan.pagliaro@ride.ri.gov, or Patricia Carnevale, at patricia.carnevale@ride.ri.gov.

NECAP

7. Opportunity to participate in the 2013 NECAP Online Writing Pilot announced

RIDE is pleased to announce another opportunity for schools to participate in a NECAP Online Writing Pilot for Grades 8 and 11. Following a very successful second year with online writing, we are expanding this pilot program to provide additional schools with the chance to participate.

We believe that moving toward online testing will provide greater fidelity between writing in the classroom and writing for assessment. The pilot test is made up of released items from NECAP writing assessments, and we will use the pilot to confirm the ability of each participating school to participate in the Fall 2013 NECAP Operational Online Writing assessment. The primary purpose of the pilot is to test the ability of our schools to administer an online assessment; therefore, scores from student work will not be returned.

The dates for this school year's Online Writing Pilot are March 25 - 29 and April 1 - 5.

Successful completion of the Spring 2013 pilot qualifies schools for participation in online operational testing in the fall of 2013.

Please note: If your school has successfully participated in a previous NECAP Online Writing Pilot (Spring 2011 or 2012), you do *not* need to participate in another pilot; however, if you have new staff members and would like to participate in the pilot a second time, you may do so.

If you are interested in having your school participate in the Online Writing Pilot, please e-mail Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley, at Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov, and request a copy of the information you'll need to determine if your school is eligible for participation.

The deadline for applying for participation in the Online Writing Pilot is **February 1**.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Tucker-Seeley at RIDE (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov or 222-8494).

8. NECAP demographic files must be downloaded by January 25, corrected by February 15 – *Action Item*

On Thursday, January 3, Measured Progress will be uploading a single file on the NECAP reporting site for each LEA data manager to download. This file will contain NECAP-testing demographic data for each school in your LEA. Once LEA data managers split the file up so that each principal gets his or her own individual file, principals will be expected to review their file for accuracy and to make any necessary corrections.

It is very important that principals check their file for accuracy because RIDE will be using the “corrected” files for both accountability and growth calculations. RIDE is providing this opportunity so that schools can be proactive this year rather than reactive once we post accountability and growth reports. By reviewing demographic data now, schools will know which students we will use to calculate reports on school performance.

Next week, we will send detailed instructions by e-mail to all LEA data managers.

Note: LEA data managers must download these files *before January 25 at 4 p.m.*, because Measured Progress will be removing all 2011-12 files (e.g., interactive NECAP data and reports) at that time from the NECAP reporting site. This date (January 25) is also the same date that the 2011-12 passwords will expire (2013 passwords will be mailed out in mid-January so that you can access 2012-13 results files on February 4).

The deadline for LEA data managers to submit a *single, corrected* file to RIDE is **February 15**.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Van Yidana (van.yidana@ride.ri.gov or 222-8488) or Dr. Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov, or 222-8494).

9. RIDE to release October 2012 NECAP results on February 8

The results of the October 2012 administration of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) tests for grades 3 through 8 and 11 will soon be available to schools and districts. The planned release schedule is as follows:

February 4 (9 a.m.): Schools and districts will be able to access a password-protected site to download all Fall 2012 NECAP results reports, including School and District Results Reports, School and District Summary Reports, Item Analysis Reports, Released Items and Support Materials documents, and the Guide to Using the NECAP Reports. Within the next two weeks, RIDE will mail letters with user-name and password information along with instructions for accessing the password-protected NECAP results online.

Schools and districts will also have access to confidential student-level data files that contain demographics, scores, questionnaire results, and student performance on the released items. *Note: All summative results are embargoed until **February 8, at 10 a.m.**, and cannot be shared with the general public until this date and time.*

February 8 (10 a.m.): RIDE will make non-confidential results available to the general public (non-confidential results are those that do not contain any student-level information). Additionally, schools and districts will no longer be required to provide a password to access the non-confidential results. Fall 2012 NECAP results information (including our annual fall NECAP results report) will be posted on our website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/results.aspx>

If you have any questions about the release of NECAP results, please contact Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov), or 222-8494).

Educator Evaluations

10. Dates added for required Rhode Island Model - Module 1 training for evaluators

In response to feedback from the field, RIDE has added four additional Module 1 training sessions that are required for personnel evaluating teachers. We are offering the new sessions on January 15 and 18 at the West Bay Collaborative, 144 Bignall St., Warwick. Module 1 is required for all personnel evaluating teachers in LEAs implementing the Rhode Island Model; to date, the training has been very well received. On the Module 1 exit surveys, 88 percent of participants have rated the training as high quality or very high quality. We are also scheduling a date for training sessions for East Bay districts.

For additional information about the Edition II Module 1 trainings, including registration instructions, please go to the *Training Registration* page on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/TrainingReg.aspx>.

11. New Meeting-in-a-Box available to help teachers benefit from the Framework for Teaching Effectiveness Series

The Framework for Teaching Effectiveness Series (FFTES) – an online, video-based, training program for teachers that explores the eight components of the Rhode Island Model Teacher Professional Practice rubric – is available to all teachers in LEAs implementing the Rhode Island Model. The FFTES enables teachers to watch videos aligned with the four performance levels

and to identify areas on which teachers may want to focus their professional development.

To help schools and districts introduce this resource to teachers, a new Meeting in a Box is available. The FFTES Meeting-in-a-Box was adapted from a resource produced in Warwick; it includes a detailed agenda, a PowerPoint with facilitation notes, and helpful tips for making the best use of this powerful resource.

The Meeting-in-a-Box materials are posted on the *Training Resources* page on the RIDE website, under the *Personnel Evaluating Teachers* tab, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/TrainingReg.aspx>.

RIDE will post this field memo on Wednesday, January 3, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>